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Gloucester Times reports on Gorton's successful 5-year collaboration with the New England Aquarium on seafood sustainability and responsible fishing practices.



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Gorton's, Aquarium see partnering gains

By Sean Horgan
Staff Writer
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Five years in, both Gorton's and the New England Aquarium consider their partnership on seafood sustainability a success.

Gloucester-based Gorton's, operating with an emphasis on assuring the sustainability of the fish stocks that comprise their products, has greatly benefited from the partnership, according to Lisa Webb, Gorton's vice president of supply chain.

"We've gotten great results over the past five years," Webb said. "We want to be one of the leaders in our industry."

Gorton's, according to Webb, relies heavily on the scientific expertise of the aquarium's sustainable seafood program to analyze the global fish supplies that Gorton's utilizes for its retail business, with an eye toward promoting sustainability.

Those stocks include Alaska pollock, salmon, tilapia, shrimp, haddock, sole and cod. There is a particular interest in the sustainability of whitefish because of its importance in Gorton's iconic fish sticks and other offerings.

Also, in 2010, the partners sent representatives to Asia to study the farmed tilapia fish supply and later made recommendations to the suppliers to reduce the wild fish component in the food source for the tilapia to promote a more sustainable balance.

"There's always going to be a lot of ups and downs with fish stocks, and that's where the New England Aquarium is giving us a lot of guidance and support to make sure we're making improvements in fishing practices and policies across all sustainability when it comes to the fisheries we're involved in," Webb said.

The two partners celebrated the fifth anniversary of their collaboration on Wednesday at the Boston-based aquarium with a food tasting of the company's sustainable seafood choices.

"Part of our mission is to protect the blue planet," said Tania Taranovski, manager of the aquarium's sustainable seafood program. "Working with businesses like Gorton's has been really wonderful. They have, through the decisions they make on what to buy and sell, an important role to play in this."

Webb said Gorton's sustainability effort seems to have resonated with its customers, partly through its Trusted Catch program that seeks to inform consumers about sustainability issues.

"It really encompasses all our sustainability and quality initiatives, from not only how we sort the seafood we buy but also our supply chain and manufacturing processes," Webb said. "We think it's starting to have an impact on our consumers."

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